

Inspection of Birchwood Avenue Primary School

Birchwood Avenue, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 0PS

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade **Good**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils consider school to be their 'happy place'. Pupils are clear that if they have any problems or concerns, they can share these with staff. They appreciate the time and effort staff put into helping them. Pupils say bullying is rare. Adults deal with it fairly and thoroughly, if it should occur. Pupils' positive relationships with each other, and adults in school help them to feel safe.

Pupils are proud of their inclusive and diverse school. They understand that everyone is different and they embrace this positively. Pupils are kind and supportive and help one another to learn.

Pupils learn well in lessons because teachers explain things clearly and give them appropriate tasks. Pupils learn a rich and varied curriculum. Leaders have high expectations of them.

Pupils take part in a range of activities that develop their confidence and understanding of how to be healthy and safe. For example, they 'eat to defeat' their vegetables to encourage healthy eating. Pupils also have the opportunity to attend a variety of after-school clubs, such as running club and football club. A range of trips give rich experiences and support learning in class.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have made lots of changes to the school since the last inspection. They have adopted a new and suitably challenging curriculum which covers all subjects.

Leaders prioritised reading when deciding which areas of the curriculum to change first. They have constructed a well-sequenced phonics curriculum which ensures that children learn sounds quickly. Leaders provide training so that staff teach phonics consistently well. They use rigorous assessment to identify anyone falling behind. Pupils catch up because they receive additional small-group phonics teaching. As a result, pupils learn to read confidently. Older pupils enjoy reading books written by a wide range of authors. Teachers read carefully selected class novels to pupils daily. Pupils enjoy these books, and this develops a love of reading.

Leaders have ensured that the new curriculum is well sequenced for all subjects. Detailed plans support teachers in knowing what to teach and how to develop pupils' learning over time. The ambition of the curriculum has raised the expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are now learning and remembering much more than previously.

Most teachers are implementing the curriculum as leaders intend. Teachers assess systematically and adapt their teaching when needed. Pupils receive additional teaching to help them catch up. Sometimes, in subjects where the curriculum changes are more recent, teachers have not fully developed the subject knowledge

they need to teach. As a result, they do not always explain content as clearly as they should. In these cases, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

In the early years, the curriculum is largely well structured. Children receive appropriate explanations and activities. As a result, they mostly learn well, especially in literacy and mathematics. However, leaders have not specified carefully enough the knowledge they want pupils to learn in all subjects. This means children do not have some of the subject-specific knowledge they should have to be ready for the Year 1 curriculum.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that teachers carefully adapt the curriculum to address specific needs. This enables pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum alongside their peers. For example, pupils receive additional guidance on how to structure their writing to help them record their ideas independently.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Staff actively manage younger pupils' behaviour in line with the school's policies and procedures. As pupils progress through the school, they learn how to regulate their emotions. They can manage their behaviour with increasing independence.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance. They have worked in a focused way to build a culture in which others' understand the need for pupils to attend school regularly. As a result, attendance has improved.

The school caters well to the personal development of pupils. Older pupils undertake a variety of leadership roles within school. For example, the 'eco council' conducts litter picks and contributes to assemblies. Younger pupils see the older pupils as positive role models and aspire to be like them.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a well-developed understanding of equalities and understand the need to treat all people with respect. The school council makes a positive contribution to school life through fund raising for charity and leading projects, like a recent talent competition. The annual election of school councillors enhances pupils' understanding of democracy.

Governors have a clear strategic vision for the school. They understand their roles and challenge leaders appropriately.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take effective and personalised actions to support individual pupils and families. They make appropriate referrals to external agencies and keep detailed records which record their timely actions. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the support they need.

Leaders ensure that appropriate recruitment procedures are followed. They undertake the checks they need to ensure all new staff are safe to work with children. Leaders provide staff with appropriate training. Weekly safeguarding updates help to sustain a culture of vigilance.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe because this is woven throughout the school's curriculum and repeated in assemblies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not have the precise the subject knowledge to teach all aspects of the revised curriculum confidently and well. As a result of this, some pupils do not build some important knowledge or develop understanding of more complex ideas in some subjects. Leaders should provide teachers with the training and support they require so that they teach all areas of the curriculum effectively.
- The curriculum in the early years does not equip pupils with all of the subject-specific knowledge they need for Year 1. This means that pupils are not as ready as they could be to learn the content in foundation subjects in Year 1. Leaders should ensure that the early years curriculum contains all of the specific knowledge that pupils need to know before they start Year 1.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	132105
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268699
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Hughes
Headteacher	Nick Read
Website	www.birchwoodavenue.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is before-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is run by staff from the school and managed by school leaders.
- Leaders currently use one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the SEND coordinator and four governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and science. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, scrutinised curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke to teachers,

talked to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors met with the assistant headteacher to look at writing, reviewed curriculum documentation and sampled pupils' work.
- The inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at safeguarding records, staff training logs and the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- The inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views. This included formal meetings and informal discussions during playtime, lunchtime and in lessons.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and staff to gather their views. The inspectors also considered the 36 responses and 36 free-text responses to the survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Sim, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Amy Luu

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